Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, March 7, 2007** **3:00 p.m.**
Date: 07/03/07
The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! All rise, please.

[The Clerk read the Royal Proclamation dated February 14, 2007, summoning the Members of the Legislative Assembly to convene on this date]

The Clerk: Please be seated.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! Order! Mr. Speaker.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Speaker, accompanied by the officers of the Assembly, entered the Chamber and took the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: To all hon. members, welcome home, and to all those present as guests, welcome to your Alberta Legislative Assembly. Would you join me now in the opening day prayer.

Almighty God, author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask Your blessings on all here present. We ask Your guidance in order that truth and justice may prevail in all of our judgments for the benefit of all Albertans. Amen.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, I would now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. Would you please join us in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members and Guests:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, 2006 was a very exciting year for the Alberta Legislative Assembly as we celebrated 100 years of democracy in this province. Over the last century the people and events that shaped this province were deserving of celebration and recognition, and it seems only fitting that as the year came to an end, we saw another historic moment take place, on December 14, 2006, the swearing-in of Alberta's 13th Premier, the Hon. Edward Michael Stelmach.

Premier Stelmach is no stranger to history and the significance it plays in our lives. He and his delightful wife, Marie, raised their four children on the homestead which was first settled by his grandfather, Nicholas Stelmach, in 1898. History and tradition are an important part of our new Premier's life, just as they are valued by this Assembly.

In terms of public service our new Premier also has had an impressive history. In this House he has served as minister of international and intergovernmental relations, minister of transportation, minister of infrastructure, and minister of agriculture, food and rural development. In his community he has served as a county reeve and school trustee and has held numerous other committee positions and memberships on boards and in organizations within his constituency.

From the date that Premier Edward Michael Stelmach was sworn in as our province's newest Premier, his every move and his every word will become part of Alberta's political history. There is no telling what that future history might include, but looking back in his speech from the December 14 swearing-in, his words may foretell that future when he said, "We have the means to build a stronger province and future . . . the future we want for our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren." Today in this Assembly I hope we can all agree that that is the future we want and that years from now it is the history we want to look back on.

On behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta I welcome you, Mr. Premier, and you, Mrs. Stelmach, Alberta's First Lady, as you take your place in this Legislature as Alberta's 13th Premier and Alberta's 13th First Lady. [Standing ovation]

head: **Entrance of the Lieutenant Governor**

[The Premier, the Clerk, and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

The Speaker: Hon. members, this past year the Canadian Forces, and Canada's army in particular, have confronted challenges not seen since Korea. The successes in Afghanistan of our highly motivated young people in uniform are deserving of greater recognition. So, too, are their sacrifices. Today in the Speaker's gallery there are three junior, noncommissioned officers from the Edmonton Garrison, who are here representing those members of our armed forces who have been to Afghanistan and may well return to that country. I'd ask each to rise in turn and remain standing as I introduce them.

From the first battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Master Corporal Peter MacLean, who is married with seven children and who has deployed on four operational tours, including Kosovo, Bosnia, and Afghanistan in 2004 and 2006; Corporal Gordon Whitton, who has served twice in Afghanistan and who was awarded a mention in dispatches. The mother of two teenage boys, Corporal Kimberly Smith-Samms completed her first overseas deployment, which was to Afghanistan, in August 2006.

It is also very appropriate to recognize Master Corporal Paul Franklin, who is seated on the floor of the Chamber. Members may recall that this gallant young soldier lost both legs as a result of a suicide bomb attack in Kandahar.

It's a remarkable testament to their character, their fortitude, and their common beliefs in the values we share as Canadians that each of these soldiers would serve again in that distant land. Let us remain mindful that our Canadian Forces are the essential guarantors of the freedoms and peace we are so fortunate to enjoy. Their hard-won successes contribute to a higher humanity in places that have seen little but strife and conflict. We are very proud of them all. [Standing ovation]

The Royal Canadian Artillery Band will now play a brief musical interlude, the details of which are in your program. The RCA Band, Canada's oldest regular army band, was founded in Quebec City in 1879. It was subsequently stationed in Montreal and then Halifax. It has seen service in both world wars and in Korea, and it has travelled across Canada and beyond our borders. Reconstituted in Edmonton in 1997, the band is today under the direction of Captain Brian Greenwood, who is in the Speaker's gallery.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Ladies and gentlemen, all rise, please.

Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

The Speaker: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

[A fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, and Mrs. Kwong, their party, the Premier, and the Clerk entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the throne]

head: **Speech from the Throne**

The Future Is Now: A Plan for Alberta

His Honour: Ladies and gentlemen, please be seated.

Fellow Albertans, welcome to the Third Session of the 26th Alberta Legislature. I am honoured once again to deliver the Speech from the Throne.

As we continue our journey into Alberta's second century, Albertans have much to be proud of and much to look forward to. Our current prosperity is the result of foresight by Albertans whose values we honour, values such as fiscal vigilance, community spirit, and self-reliance. It is a result of a strong respect for the environment and an appreciation for lifelong learning. It is because of these shared values and through the hard work of Albertans that this province is looked to as a leader in Canada and across the globe.

Alberta is fortunate, but Albertans have made good use of the resources that nature has bestowed upon our province, and they have made wise choices, including the bold and often difficult decisions made during the past decade. Many of those decisions were made with a thoughtful eye on the future. Fellow Albertans, that future is now.

Now more than ever the government must work with Albertans to ensure that the good fortune we enjoy today is not squandered. We must respect and build on the work and the sacrifices that were made in the past. We must plan ahead to ensure that the prosperity this province enjoys today is secured for our children and grandchildren. This means making the right choices so that Alberta's economic growth remains sustainable and that the world-class quality of life Albertans enjoy includes a clean and healthy environment.

A New Approach to Working for Albertans

With a wealth of new opportunities to be seized and some tough challenges to be addressed, this government is taking a fresh look at how it works on behalf of Albertans and the priorities on which it will focus. Albertans expect their government to reflect the realities they are facing today. They expect a new approach by their government, one that recognizes the unique qualities of Albertans and their province, one that recognizes the opportunities and challenges we face. Your new government has that plan.

In carrying it out, the government will be guided by the values of Albertans. It will ensure respect for the environment and compassion for others. It will be open and accountable, fiscally responsible, and inclusive. At this unique time in our history Albertans expect their government to have a clear plan and to deliver tangible results. Ladies and gentlemen, your government will deliver on behalf of all Albertans.

Acting on Albertans' Priorities

The government of Alberta will act on Albertans' priorities to ensure a higher standard of living, greater opportunities, and an even better quality of life for all citizens of this province. The government will act thoughtfully and decisively on behalf of Albertans. The government of Alberta will govern with integrity and transparency, manage growth pressures, improve Albertans' quality of life, provide safe and secure communities, and build a stronger Alberta.

Governing with Integrity and Transparency

Governing with integrity and transparency is the first priority of this government for a deeply fundamental reason. Albertans put their highest trust in the women and men elected to represent their best interests. That trust will be honoured and respected.

Your government will introduce legislation to establish a lobbyist registry. Bill 1, the Lobbyists Act, will give all Albertans public access to information regarding individuals and organizations seeking to influence government decisions. It will also take measures to improve information provided to the public about who has contracts with government. These measures will increase transparency, openness, and accountability and will enhance public trust in the institution of government.

Your government will also review the way agencies, boards, and commissions are governed to ensure greater accountability. It will look for more efficient and productive ways of conducting the business of government, and it will look for opportunities for all parties represented in the Legislature to work together to better serve Albertans.

Managing Growth Pressures

Alberta's economy is leading the country with a record pace of development. More than half a million people have moved here from other provinces in the past half-dozen years. The government of Alberta has reinforced its determination to effectively manage the pressures that come with rapid economic growth. It will act decisively to minimize the price we are all paying for prosperity and address pressures on housing, labour, infrastructure, and the environment.

Your government recognizes that adequate housing is essential for all Albertans to share in the prosperity of their province. It has created a provincial task force to find ways to make affordable housing more accessible to Albertans. It will focus on solutions for homelessness and the provision of affordable housing.

Despite so many people moving to Alberta each year, our economy is in dire need of people to answer the calls for "help wanted" across the province. To help meet this demand, your government will focus on better co-ordination of economic development, immigration, and labour force planning. It will craft a made-in-Alberta solution to labour needs.

Like the early settlers who helped build our province, immigrants today come here with hopes of creating a better life for themselves and a better future for their children. The government of Alberta will help new Albertans realize their dreams. It will encourage them to put down roots, raise their families here, and contribute to and share in Alberta's prosperity.

Your government will increase support for First Nations and Métis skills training and labour force development so that those Albertans with the deepest roots in this province will also have more opportunities to reap the rewards of Alberta's prosperity.

The current economic growth is placing great pressure on our

province's infrastructure. Your government will develop a long-term capital plan that will address infrastructure needs and inflation costs while exploring options to fund new capital projects. It will also place great emphasis on controlled spending to ensure that Albertans get the best possible value for their tax dollars.

The government of Alberta will continue to build on its solid record in environmental management with some of the most progressive legislation and action-based strategies in the country. Working with Albertans, the government will turn current environmental challenges into new opportunities. This will enhance Alberta's standing as a leader in practical, innovative, and sustainable environmental policies.

Your government will encourage all Albertans to take personal responsibility for energy efficiency and reduced consumption because the environment is a shared responsibility between government, industry, and all members of society.

Alberta's legislation for regulating greenhouse gas emissions was the first in Canada specifically addressing climate change, but this government knows more must be done. This spring the government of Alberta will introduce legislation that will complete implementation of Alberta's groundbreaking climate change plan. It will establish greenhouse gas emission intensity targets for industry under the specified gas emitters regulation. These will be the first legislated emission intensity reduction targets for large industrial emitters in Canada.

At the same time, the government will work with Albertans to outline its next steps on this important issue. By fall 2007 Alberta will have a new climate change action plan to move beyond what's been accomplished so far.

To maintain our high quality of life, it is essential that Albertans properly manage our province's water supplies. The government of Alberta's Water for Life strategy is North America's most comprehensive water management plan. Since 2003 it has provided Alberta with an action plan to manage water supplies during this time of unprecedented economic growth. It is essential to ensure that this plan is based on current realities. Later this year the Alberta Water Council will consult with Albertans on updating the Water for Life strategy and provide recommendations to government by year-end.

Your government will introduce strategies and provide new funding to respond to growth pressures related to the development of Alberta's oil sands. As a first big step the government of Alberta has committed almost $400 million in new funding over the next three years to complete new water and waste-water treatment facilities, develop 300 affordable housing units, and address health pressures in the Wood Buffalo region. It will also create an oil sands sustainable development secretariat to better plan and co-ordinate delivery of services as this important resource is developed. In addition, the Oil Sands Multi-Stakeholder Committee will complete its work and recommend strategies and policies, based on Albertans' input, to guide future development.

Your government will also complete its land-use framework, which will guide the way to balancing the economic, environmental, and social needs of Albertans. These initiatives will mark the beginning of a new era in managing the overall environmental effects of development. It will blend Alberta's environment-related policies, including Water for Life, the climate change action plan, and the land-use framework, to ensure that Alberta's environment continues to be protected.

head: Improving Albertans' Quality of Life

Albertans have told their government that economic prosperity must not come at the expense of quality of life, and the government of Alberta is listening. It will ensure that services, programs, and infrastructure are in place to maintain Albertans' high quality of life.

Albertans have always placed a high value on learning, and this government recognizes that education is key to improving quality of life. Your government will continue to look for innovative ways to improve Alberta's outstanding K to 12 education system. It will work with community partners, school boards, and educators to develop effective strategies that support teachers, parents, students, and administrators in continuing to provide a first-rate learning environment.

Your government will also increase access and quality in postsecondary education while strengthening its support for community education and literacy programs. It will work to improve high school completion rates and increase access to postsecondary education with an emphasis on the Campus Alberta approach. The government will ensure that Alberta's postsecondary institutions have defined roles and responsibilities within a comprehensive advanced learning system. Investments in advanced education will be targeted towards a comprehensive framework that will make postsecondary education, trade and occupational training more accessible to adult learners.

The government of Alberta will continue to encourage and support Albertans in taking steps to improve and maintain individual, family, and community health. A sustained focus on wellness, injury reduction, and disease prevention combined with efforts to improve productivity and accountability in health care delivery will provide the framework to ensure a sustainable public health care system.

Building the health workforce of the future will be a top priority. Albertans will see stronger emphasis on primary health care and self-management of chronic diseases through the provision of information, resources, and support.

The government of Alberta will assist people living in the community with serious mental illness, and their families, with improved access to support services and treatment. A new pharmaceutical strategy will capitalize on opportunities to improve the range of drugs available and to reduce or avoid costs. Your government will work to expand long-term care capacity, improve standards, and ensure that facilities and supports are available to seniors as the population ages. Your government will continue to improve the quality of life in First Nations and Métis communities, and it will ensure that government policies better reflect the needs of persons with disabilities.

This province is known as one of the best places to live and raise a family, in large part because of the spirit of community that Albertans cherish. Albertans value compassion, and they take pride in coming together to volunteer time and money to help others in need. Reflecting these values, the government of Alberta will lead the creation of a community spirit program for charitable giving. The program will support increases for private charitable donations through tax credits and establish a community spirit fund to provide matching grants for eligible donations to Alberta-based registered charities. The government will establish an all-party MLA committee to guide the creation of this program.

Providing Safe and Secure Communities

Albertans place a high priority on living in a peaceful society, where laws are respected and consideration for others is practised. They want to be assured that their communities will remain safe and secure as the province undergoes rapid growth and change. The Alberta government will act on this priority. It will work with communities to make neighbourhoods stronger and safer.

To this end, your government will work with community leaders

to establish a crime reduction and safe communities task force that will consult with Albertans on how to reduce crime and improve public confidence in the justice system. This initiative will build on the work being done by 13 partnering government ministries to develop and implement an integrated crime reduction strategy. Through this collaboration the province will see a future in which Albertans experience less crime, feel less fearful of crime, and work together to make their communities safer.

Building a Stronger Alberta

Albertans and their government know that the province's economic success must not be taken for granted. The Alberta government will act now to build an even stronger Alberta. It will conduct an open and transparent review of the resource royalty system through an independent committee recently established. At the end of the review Albertans must be confident that the right system is in place, one that is fair to both industry and to Albertans, who own the resources.

Your government will also develop strategies to ensure that Albertans have long-term access to reliable and diverse sources of energy for homes, small businesses, and larger industries, and it will encourage the upgrading and refining of nonrenewable resources in Alberta to obtain maximum value for Albertans and to create new business opportunities and long-term jobs.

The government of Alberta will develop a comprehensive energy strategy, which will ensure the sustainable development of the province's resources in an environmentally responsible manner, making full use of innovations such as near zero emission coal. The strategy will look at all of Alberta's energy resources with a focus on renewable resources, including electricity generated by wind and bioenergy such as ethanol and other biofuels. Development in these areas will provide new opportunities for rural Alberta and the agriculture community. While much of the focus on sustainable development is directed at industry, individual Albertans must play their part as well to promote energy efficiency and reduce consumption.

A strong Alberta requires strong municipalities. This government recognizes that municipalities provide many of the day-to-day services upon which Albertans rely. Your government has therefore renewed efforts to work with municipalities to better serve Albertans. This includes developing a long-term funding arrangement that is sustainable and recognizes the challenges municipalities have in raising revenues to provide essential services on the front lines of Alberta's tremendous growth. This co-operative effort has already yielded results that will benefit all Albertans. The provincial government has committed an additional $1.4 billion in annual funding to municipalities, which will be phased in over the next four years.

Albertans want to be sure that revenues they entrust to their provincial government are used prudently to build a stronger Alberta today and for generations to come. Your government is taking action by developing a surplus management policy that reflects Albertans' long-term priorities. Details of this policy will be announced with the 2007 provincial budget.

Your government will ensure that savings are targeted to the province's future needs. It will strengthen the governance of its investments so that the funds Albertans entrust to it are managed most effectively.

The Alberta government will also establish an institute for agriculture, forestry, and the environment, which will put research and innovation to practical, real-world use to benefit Albertans and the environment. The institute will develop market-based solutions to environmental sustainability challenges surrounding agriculture and renewable resource sectors such as forestry. As all Albertans know, much of Alberta's economic strength is based on natural resources.

To ensure that Alberta remains prosperous for future generations, it is essential to seize the opportunity now to further strengthen and diversify our economy. Your government will build on Alberta's traditional strengths, which include energy, agriculture, forestry, tourism, and the people of this province. It will build on these strengths to develop a robust knowledge-based economy to compete in world markets.

The Alberta government will develop a long-term strategy for technology commercialization and economic diversification. It will continue to focus on research in priority areas of energy, information and communications technology, and life sciences. In addition, it will place an increased emphasis on nanotechnology, the science of small. Research in this field has the potential to impact every sector of our economy and to diversify and sustain Alberta's prosperity for generations. Led by world-class researchers at the National Institute for Nanotechnology in Edmonton, our province is positioned to become an international leader in this field.

Conclusion

Fellow Albertans, the government of Alberta is making a solemn commitment to you. In all that it does, it will reflect your values and act on your priorities. It will conduct itself with the recognition that it is an honour and a privilege to serve as government, not a right, and that it must continuously earn that privilege. Your government will listen to and work with Albertans because together we can do great things.

We are faced with a unique opportunity to build for the future and to secure the long-term prosperity of our great province. Your government has a solid plan to accomplish these goals. It will take full advantage of that opportunity.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, and may God bless you all.

God bless Alberta.

God bless Canada.

God save the Queen.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! All rise, please.

The Speaker: Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, I would now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of *God Save The Queen*. Please remain standing at the conclusion.

Hon. Members and Guests:

God save our gracious Queen,
long live our noble Queen,
God save The Queen!
Send her victorious,
happy and glorious,
long to reign over us:
God save The Queen!

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Their Honours, their party, and the Premier left the Chamber as a fanfare of trumpets sounded]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

[The Mace was uncovered]

[The Premier returned to the Chamber]

head: **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Bill 1
Lobbyists Act

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 1, the Lobbyists Act.

One of our top five priorities is governing with integrity and transparency, and this act, the Lobbyists Act, is an example of our commitment to this principle. Our commitment to openness in government, openness in business dealings is demonstrated in three ways through the Lobbyists Act: first, by establishing a lobbyist registry; secondly, by requiring lobbyists to declare existing contracts they have to give advice to government; and lastly, by regularly publishing an online, searchable index of who has contracts with the government. One of the key features of the legislation is the prohibition from lobbying and providing advice to government on the same issue at the same time.

The lobbyist registry will be administered by the Ethics Commissioner. It will be fully accessible on the Internet and will identify the subject matter of each lobbying activity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a first time]

head: **Tablings**

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have the honour to table a copy of the speech graciously given by His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

head: **Motions**

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I move that the speech of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to this Assembly be taken into consideration on Thursday, March 8, 2007.

[Motion carried]

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I would move that pursuant to Standing Order 52(1) the select standing committees for the present session of the Legislative Assembly be appointed for the following purposes:

(1) Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund,
(2) Legislative Offices,
(3) Private Bills,
(4) Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, and
(5) Public Accounts.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that the following members be appointed to the Assembly's five standing committees:

(1) Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund: Mr. Johnston, chair; Mr. Rogers, deputy chair; Mr. Doerksen; Mr. Griffiths; Mr. MacDonald; Mr. Magnus; Mr. Mar; Mrs. Mather; and Mr. Pham.
(2) Legislative Offices: Mr. Rodney, chair; Mr. Magnus, deputy chair; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Cao; Mr. Coutts; Mr. Ducharme; Mr. Flaherty; Mr. Marz; Mr. McFarland; Dr. Pannu; and Mr. VanderBurg.
(3) Private Bills: Ms DeLong, chair; Dr. Brown, deputy chair; Reverend Abbott; Mr. Agnihotri; Mr. Amery; Ms Calahasen; Mr. Doerksen; Mr. Dunford; Mr. Eggen; Mr. Elsalhy; Mrs. Jablonski; Mr. Johnson; Mr. Lougheed; Mr. Lukaszuk; Mr. Mitzel; Mr. Pham; Mr. Prins; Mr. Rogers; Mr. Shariff; Dr. Swann; and Mr. Tougas.
(4) Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing: Mr. Zwozdesky, chair; Mr. Johnson, deputy chair; Reverend Abbott; Mr. Amery; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Cardinal; Mr. Cenaiko; Mr. Flaherty; Mrs. Forsyth; Mrs. Fritz; Mr. Griffiths; Mr. Hancock; Mr. Herard; Mr. Lougheed; Mr. Lukaszuk; Mr. MacDonald; Mr. Marz; Mr. Mitzel; Mr. Oberle; Dr. Pannu; and Ms Pastoor.
(5) Public Accounts: Mr. MacDonald, chair; Mr. Prins, deputy chair; Mr. Bonko; Dr. Brown; Mr. Cardinal; Mr. Cenaiko; Mr. Chase; Ms DeLong; Mr. Dunford; Mr. Eggen; Mrs. Forsyth; Mr. Herard; Mr. Johnston, Mr. R. Miller; Mr. Rodney; Mr. Strang; and Mr. Webber.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that the Assembly stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; at 3:57 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]